The Many Lives of Indian Cinema: 1913-2013 and beyond

Technologies, Histories, Disciplines, Futures

Report of the Sessions

Abhija Ghosh, Debjani Dutta and Harmanpreet Kaur

School of Arts and Aesthetics, Jawaharlal Nehru University

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Centre for the Study of Developing Societies

29 Rajpur Road, Delhi

<sarai.net> <csds.in>

Credits

Concept: **Ravi Vasudevan**

Production: **Ishita Tiwary**

Operations: **Ashish Mahajan**

Programme Coordinator: **Tanveer Kaur**

Infrastructure: **Sachin Kumar, Vikas Chaurasia**

Consultant: **Ravikant**

Audio-visual Production: **Ritika Kaushik**

Print Design: **Mrityunjay Chatterjee**

Cover Image: **Mrityunjay Chatterjee**

Rapporteurs: **Abhija Ghosh, Debjani Dutta, and Harmanpreet Kaur**

Back Cover Image: **Shahid Datawala, Sarai Archive**

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Histories, Connections and Comparisons

Chair: Rosie Thomas

Rapporteur: Debjani Dutta

Focusing on histories of transnational film exchange, this session re-situated national cinematic cultures by tracing the shared idioms, viewing practices and circuits of labour through which they are connected. The complex and often contradictory interlinkages between representational tropes, genres and modes of exhibition on the one hand, and discourses of race, religion, nationality and censorship on the other, were charted through alternatively inflected routes. Captured in their moment of encounter with the 'other', industrial practices and formations were seen as constituted by diverse cultural influences. Even as the foreign is comprehended and consumed through various translational strategies, it holds up a reflexive mirror to the systems of hierarchy and stratification within which film industries and audiences are embedded. Moreover, these geopolitical shifts are set in motion through a re-evaluation of both the form and function of the archive. Decentralised and highly mobile, archival border-crossings yield critical tools that enable one to negotiate with regulatory regimes while reconceiving the practices of film historiography.

Nitin Govil's paper on encounters between Hollywood and Bombay cinema looked at the history of exchange between 1913 and World War II, focusing on the manner in which India was imagined and translated by Hollywood through its association with certain terminologies, representational tropes and labour practices. The discussion began with an attempt to chart the relationship between these sensuous entanglements and the political and industrial imperatives of the time. The word 'Hindoo' conjures up an imagination of the strange and exotic, and it emerged that its representational possibilities were intimately tied to the logic of film production as well as the legal restrictions imposed by the British colonial government. Using both pre-existing travelogue footage as well as material shot in Hollywood studios, spectacular elements were often inserted into the narrative in early feature-length films. Studios invested much capital in this system of representation –building special sets and even training 'Hindoo' monkeys in their own zoos –and these images travelled to produce the Orient. In light of colonial film policy attempting to place limits on the exhibition of American films in India, Hollywood also attempted to placate the government through a series of Empire films shot in America.

The discussion yielded several points of connection between India and Hollywood, producing figures and fragments that nuance the argument. For instance, the Boston Brahmin, standing in stark contrast to the Californian labour immigrant, was a figure that implicated social discourse in America with the imagery of caste. Gayatri Chatterjee provided many other examples, citing the experience of Indian nautch girls who travelled to the States in 1889 and wanted to stay on despite being criticized, as well as a reference in Susan Bean's Yankee India (2001) to a copy of the Upanishads that made its way to Salem port.

Yomi Braester's paper on the possibilities for negotiation and resistance afforded by the circulation of Indian films in the festival circuit in China invited a discussion on Chinese independent cinema and its relationship to other film cultures. While recent efforts to intensify film exchange between the two countries have been influential in creating multiple viewing publics and spaces, the discussion looked at whether these could be placed within the conceptual and historical framework of inter-Asian connections. Braester deliberated on the nature of independent cinema in China, which covers a diverse set of practices ranging from documentaries to commercial films. The question of independent cinema could be posed in relationship to State support and censorship, but also to larger political notions of 'freedom' and 'independence'. Thus, while Chinese cinema shares ties with Hong Kong, India and other Asian film cultures, it also owes its particular form to the political context within which it is operating. At the same time, Lalitha Gopalan argued that while tracing the connections between the two film cultures, it was also important to account for Chinese influences on Indian experimental cinema and installation art.

Focusing on the critical function of the archive, the paper posited film festivals as liminal spaces that allow for free discussion of independent films and foster new viewing practices in a climate otherwise marked by governmental curbs on film production and exhibition. Pointing to the circulation of specially assembled DVDs through pirate networks in China, Ravi Sundaram argued that these have also played a pivotal role in creating a cinephilic culture and bypassing State censorship. He highlighted the need to account for the intersections between formal spaces of film festivals on the one hand, and underground economies on the other. Ashish Rajadhyaksha also signalled the need to account for pre-existing and alternative

channels of film circulation, attributing the success of Indian documentaries screened at the West Heavens project to the long and almost unacknowledged tradition of documentary filmmaking within China. The discussion also indicated the possibilities afforded by the internet, which has widened the reach of these films as free online downloads provided by platforms such as CNEX have become extremely popular.

Histories: The Itineraries of Urdu

Chair: Ira Bhaskar

Rapporteur: Harmanpreet Kaur

Lotte Hoek and Iftikar Dadi's research papers led to a discussion on questions of historiography and identity. Hoek's research on Urdu language cinema of East Pakistan went into the specifics of the film Son of Pakistan which she argued preserved an important history of the nation that the Bangladesh film archive was unwilling to, even when it held some material about the pre-Bangladesh past. Questions arose about the wider production and circulation of Urdu films during this period, the incidence of bilingual films, films made in West Bengal finding an audience in East Pakistan, and the circulation of Bangladeshi filmmakers in West Bengal. Hoek discussed her attraction to that which falls outside official history and how she used an ethnographic approach to study history and memory. As with the role of Urdu, she felt that the Hindi language finds a similar space in South Asian

cultures and Bangladesh had tried to keep it out of the country. She also discussed the way in which the Pakistani government managed the flow of films across borders by dividing Indian films by language in their distribution between East and West Pakistan.

Iftikar Dadi discussed the Urdu film Zehr-i-Ishq (1958) based on a long erotic masnavi poem by Mirza Shawq. While the original poem was about obsession and melancholy, Dadi used film clips to highlight an engagement with the semiotics of human life versus animals, dolls and art. Ravikant wanted to know Dadi's take on the writings of ZA Bukhari who was a part of the censor board in Pakistan and the first director of Radio Pakistan. He mentioned how Bukhari was deeply disappointed with Pakistani cinema which he felt copied Indian cinema and in process damaged its own nationhood. Dadi found Bukhari's to be an elitist critique by someone who valued high literary culture and who taught actors to speak in a histrionic manner rather than in natural ways. He also wanted to displace issues of plagiarism by approaching Pakistani cinema through the logic of mass culture. Despite the anxiety over Pakistan's individuality, he believed mass culture to offer material that would open up the question and allow for diverse angles of engagement.

Affective Engagements: Of Love and Devotion

Chair: Ravikant

Rapporteur: Abhija Ghosh

There was a change in session title from the original programme. Chaired by Ravikant, the focus shifted from genre to affect. **Gayatri Chatterjee**'s paper titled "A Lexicon of Love: Affect, Language, Technology" attempted to navigate the affective and mythic layers of language in Bombay cinema through the use of words for love such as 'prem',' ishq', and 'junoon', especially in the Hindi film song. Chatterjee's selections from Mere Mehboob (1963) not only elicited interesting responses from the audience at the session but also raised some questions about cinematic performances of love. Richard Allen asked whether the 'purdah' narrative in Mere Mehboob complicated the 'mythical idea of love' that Chatterjee was trying to trace, as the camera acquires a certain transgressive potential by moving into the woman's space inaccessible to the hero. Gayatri Chatterjee replied that indeed the gaze and the third person camera angle play a significant part in constructing the notions of romance in cinematic narratives, especially in star couple films, an issue she has followed elsewhere. However, since she was invested in syntactical transformations of the word of love and its various connotative meanings in the history of popular cinema, she focused here on the film song instead. S. V Srinivas then suggested whether it would be worthwhile to pursue this project in a reverse trajectory, where the history of these words could be seen as affecting the cinematic.

The second paper of this session was by **Uma Bhrugubanda** on "The Making of Citizen- Devotees: The Question of Spectatorship in Mythological and Devotional Cinema" raised questions from the audience about visual composition, generic codes and categories and sites of exhibition. Bhrugubanda's paper dealt with a lot of extra cinematic and archival material to trace the construction of audiences as 'citizen devotees', especially the female spectator. Here she engaged the complicated ways `goddess films' constituted the spectator at the interface between the state and religiosity, in this case mediated through the institution of cinema. The paper explored audience rituals during the viewing of these 'goddess' or `amman' films, a genre or sub-genre dating to the early film devotionals and mythologicals and continuing till the eighties in Telugu and Tamil cinema. This aspect of religiosity raised discussion about the appropriate categories for this type of film experience. Ashish Avikunthak argued that such films highlighted the importance of religiosity as a dimension of film experience. Anand Pandian reflected on whether it was possible to understand these reception practices of devotion and possession not only in relation to religiosity and the address of the state, but to imagine them as 'devotees' of cinema in the sense of mass fan culture.

In responding to these insights and queries, Uma Bhrugunanda stated that she understood the `amman' genre in terms of Linda William's theorizing of 'body genres' which affectively constitute the spectator. She noted that this formulation accounts for the way the lines between the devotional and non-devotional were often blurred in the bodily experience associated with the genre; however the categories of industrial exhibition still required to be factored into analysis of the phenomenon. Another interesting insight came from S.V. Srinivas when he remarked on both devotionals and pornographic film being screened at the

morning eleven o'clock time slot. This highlighted once again the imbrications of religiosity, bodily experience, and sexuality, and supplemented Bhrugubunda's focus on film as an ethnographic object in public culture.

Experimentation in Cinema I

Chair: Moinak Biswas

Rapporteur: Harmanpreet Kaur

Shai Heredia's paper opened up the question of value attached to experimental cinema in India. With no exhibition circuits for small, independent avant-garde films, she wondered how they could gain value, visibility and accessibility. What is a good work of art? Is there a critical discourse to measure it? Who owns non-market based work? **Ashish Avikuntak** discussed his project of 100 years of Experimentation with FD Zone and the process of its compilation. He felt closer to the sensibility of Gandhi's experiments with truth rather than the western avant-garde. **CAMP**'s presentation attempted to reach out behind the visual image to its back-end infrastructure to explore filmmaking processes and wider technological networks. Their projects included research into how specific CCTV sites were used in the UK and Palestine, and the deployment of camera, telescope and mobile camera on a boat traversing various routes in the Indian Ocean. They drew upon Ranciere's work with the insensible to draw out the importance of technological deployment in setting up the conditions of the visible..

Ranjani Mazumdar kickstarted the discussion by asking for clarification about the use of the term 'experimental'. While Shai Heredia used it to analyse non-commercial, poetic and smaller cinema, Ashish Avikuntak distanced himself from the term. Mazumdar wondered if there were different ways the word 'experimental' was used as it entered and became attuned to markets and publics. Heredia stated that she was not looking at 'experimental' as a genre but as a practice that is rewarding, personal, experiential, concerned with the filmmaker's point of view and plays with the visual medium. It is difficult to define 'experimental', a term used very loosely for personal practices outside the mainstream. However, it was pointed out that there has been an interesting slippage in the mainstream art context whereby formally marginal works acquire value. The term 'artist film and video' is also finding new currency.

Avikuntak was not inclined towards the word 'experiment' because as an artist-filmmaker, cinema of prayoga (as conceived by Amrit Gangar) was a more useful refuge for him. As a curator, he uses 'experimentation' to suggest an ontological practice rather a representational one. He does not want to have a conversation with the Western art world where the word 'experimental' carries an art historical emphasis on structure and form. CAMP's **Shaina Anand** noted the weird revival of the experimental avant-garde in the world of art with collectors wanting to own original negatives of avant-garde films. For her, an experiment is precise in its use of certain ingredients but seeks to throw up surprises and new images.

Discussing the presentation of CAMP, Ravi Sundaram observed that their project undertakes a rethinking of space. He pointed to two different instances: firstly the classic way of looking through the CCTV and secondly the fragment on the boat shot with a mobile phone. For the second fragment, he felt that the frame became a vehicle whose parameters were not already designated. Thus the status of the mobile video is different from that of CCTV as is that of the Radia tapes (mentioned in their paper) with their unresolved aesthetics. **Sukumaran** explained the presence of different cameras – one embedded on a wall in Palestine, another free on the ocean and the third, a telescope. The CCTV is neither scopic nor hand held and its footage constitutes an exception. Thus they are looking at cameras which are not linked to human eyes as most lens-based practice assumes.

Anand Pandian raised the question of Walter Benjamin saying that any man can lay claim to being filmed, and with respect to CAMP's paper, there is already a certain sensibility of being on film as part of ordinary experience, whether or not we are aware of the presence of the camera. Pandian questions whether their footage can be called insensible. In his response, Sukumaran clarified that the question of the insensible derives from a back-end of images with massive infrastructures and systems. The projects look at the relationship between that which cannot be seen, a realm of technological arrangement which produces the possibility of sense perception, and that which is sensed, the realm of views, sounds, sensations.

Experimentation in Cinema II

Chair: Richard Allen

Rapporteur: Debjani Dutta

The recent years have witnessed various instances where celluloid works (works produced and intended to be exhibited on celluloid platforms) have been situated within different kinds of self-conscious post-celluloid contexts (video art/installations). This panel examines specific instances where celluloid films have been framed within post-celluloid environments to see how these works foundationally reanimate questions around restoration, exhibition, and circulation of the celluloid medium itself. Both papers look at two specific experimental video works that are hyper-attentive to the ontological differences between their own recording medium and the 'films' they mobilize - in the process raising crucial questions around how we understand and code the ever-mutating celluloid archive, and place it within the larger context of film history in general.

Ashish Rajadhyaksha revisits a specific panel he curated in Guangzhao, China in 2011. Films by Mani Kaul (Dhrupad, Siddheshwari, and Arrival) were exhibited simultaneously with the work of video artist Ranbir Kaleka (in which he projects video images on a painting). Rajadhyaksha notes that there is an increasing convergence between experimental film and video art; and his primary interests lie in installations that conjoin films from the celluloid era with self –reflexively post celluloid consumption contexts. This transition in the exhibition process, Rajadhyaksha claims is not an uninterrupted process – and the technical, display-

related and conceptual problems such re-framing throws up, sheds new light on the digitized film material as well. This transmogrification process for Rajadhyaksha is a kind of re-enactment of memory – except that it is one that is cleansed of all messiness, sterile and largely without trauma. He recounts various incidents during the process of restoration of Mani Kaul's films, wherein the post celluloid image appears to be violently different from the film stock. But despite their radically different medial technologies, Rajadhyaksha contends that the practice of projecting moving images on a still image, leaves something like a residue – a set of traces not unlike those seen in a lot of early cinema. He traces similar impulses in Mani Kaul's work to explore the relationship between the still image and the moving image (the freeze frames in Duvidha, the 96 frames per second shot at the end of Siddeshwari etc), and contends that in some ways Kaul's thematic concerns are concomitant with Kaleka's.

Lalitha Gopalan's paper examines Ayisha Abraham's experimental film 'Straight 8' (2005). Straight 8 – A portrait of Tom D'Aguiar. This is a video patched together from a collection of old 8mm film strips that date back to the 1940's, shot by the amateur film maker Tom D'Aguiar. The film puts together different fragments and slices of different times and places without a clearly discernable beginning and end, and culminates in an interview with Tom D'Aguiar himself who attempts to recall the conditions under which some of the footage was shot. Gopalan is interested in how the digital coding of different film formats begins to transmute the material. She observes that Abraham stages a series of interventions to create a kind of celluloid atmosphere – the sound of film projector, the audio of the film edit, that are played in background to the video of the scratchy film clips. By doing this, a fictional logic is imposed on what were stray images shot by D'Aguiar, propelling the home video

form into the space of the avant-garde. The convergence of media in this kind of a form creates a fictional world in its own right, and the functional exercise of reducing noise and preserving visual material becomes an aesthetic overhaul that reactivates the very material it preserves.

January 10, 2014, Friday

Histories: Cities I

Chair: Kaushik Bhaumik

Rapporteur: Abhija Ghosh

Ravi Vasudevan in his opening address to the conference had pointed to the significance of the city as an important vector in reimagining histories surrounding cinema in India; a shift that perhaps significantly underlines the move within the discipline of Cinema Studies, from textual analysis to relocating the cinematic object in various cultural contexts, technological fields and public spheres. Kaushik Bhaumik, who chaired the session, noted that both the papers in this session recovered histories from the limited material on early Indian cinema available in the archives.

Stephen Hughes began his paper, "Early Film Going as Heterotopic Mobility: Urban Journeys, Public Space and Cinema Theatres in Chennai", by noting that the concept

of mobility informed his paper to a much larger extent than 'heterotopia', something which was at present provisional, awaiting further exploration. His paper dealt with aspects of film going and its interface with social and cultural practices in the city of Madras in the early twentieth century. The experience of walking as evoked in Giuliana Bruno's work, Atlas of Emotion, served as an important reference point. His project undertakes a mapping of the city through assorted journeys accessed through anecdotes and, most importantly, photographs. He argued that cinema exhibits both an architectural stability in the form of the permanent theatre, as well as modes of mobility through its life as a travelling/circulating object. Such movement, and the movement of filmgoing publics, offer alternative narratives of colonial societies and cities. Hughes attempted to read street geographies by mobilizing the colonial visual archive, and created an imaginary template of the colonial city, drawn from the crisscrossing journeys of pedestrian walking, the routes of tram cars and motor buses, and the location and facades of cinema halls such as Metro Cinema, Wellington Cine and Star Talkies. Moreover, he posited this method as a way of understanding the practice of 'going to the cinema', based on the mode, distance and itinerary of travel , the push and shove of travelling publics and audiences, and what such bodily experience had on processes of making meaning in cinema.

This point of inquiry garnered quite a few remarks and reactions from the conference audience, with special attention given to a photograph Hughes displayed. This was of a couple of female vendors, sitting with their wares, cramped at the back of a tram car. Their poised yet astute glance towards the viewer/photographer, and the closed interior of the tram, was suggestive of the interstitial spaces within colonial civil society that the paper sought to reimagine

and relocate. Lalitha Gopalan observed that this particular image offered a reservoir of possibilities for rescuing the early film spectator from the Cartesian scheme. Apart from questions on how gender operated within such urban movements, there was some skepticism towards the application of such anthropological methods to processes of meaning generation in cinema. Richard Allen remarked that the idea of movement might affect the reception of some films but not all. Similarly, Yomi Braester suggested the obverse possibility that cinema had the potential to reprioritize the experience of the city, even change how the city functioned.

Before moving on to the complexities arising at the interface of cinema studies and urban archaeologies, it is important to discuss the second paper of the session "Cinema in the Colonial City: Early Screen Cultures in Calcutta" by **Ranita Chatterjee**. In recovering early histories of cinematic movement and circulation in the colonial city, this paper was an interesting parallel to Hughes spatial mapping of public movement. Chatterjee complicated the spatial dimensions of the cinema theatre as well as the categories of mobility through her focus on the mobility of the cinematic object and of the screen, for example in the form of travelling cinema and tent theatres. The presentation sought to unsettle accounts of cinematic origins, and, indeed, the validity of such objectives in studying film history. Instead, Chatterjee charted a trajectory of the arrival of mass film culture in colonial Calcutta and its role in the construction of a cosmopolitan social sensibility within the city. Chatterjee also argued for the importance Madan Theatres which through its tent cinemas marked a new chapter in the history of public theatre in the subcontinent. In turn, this focus on extended circulation also drew attention to the continued

exploitation of film to the point of its existence as junk material, and how this enabled the economic viability of the film trade.

The question of disciplinary practice constituted a substantial part of the debate in this session, centred on approaches to urban and cinematic experience, and the archival material that was being deployed. Ravi Vasudevan observed that while Hughes marked a shift from textual focus to locate the cinema within urban trajectories of transport, materials and bodies, further questions needed to be posed about the relation between different forms of urban experience. He also suggested that both papers drew upon archival material such as maps and photographs that have a complicated artefactual history, with uses beyond their evidentiary status for film studies. Ranjani Mazumdar reflecting on Ranita Chatterjee's presentation suggested that early cinema was defined in crucial ways by the circulation of junk film, and it was a challenge to explore the different registers of film experience this gestured to. More generally, she suggested that there was a need to look for visual evidence of the experience of viewing and map this in relation to diverse urban spaces and cinema cultures. The session concluded with S.V. Srinivas suggesting that the complexity of movement included the way various languages travelled along with urban and cinematic journeys, a key dimension of the dynamic of presidential port cities. This could not be uncovered from visual archives alone, other materials needed to be looked at.

Histories: Cities II

Chair: Ranjani Mazumdar

Rapporteur: Debjani Dutta

Taking forward the conversation around linkages between early film-going practices and the urban imagination in the previous session, this panel entered into the discussion from a variety of historical and regional vantage points. The papers dealt with moments of rapid urban and socio-political transformation, bringing forth the overlaps and tensions between the aesthetic project of the city and that of cinema. They employed a range of methods and materials, mapping the intimate imbrications between the textual world of films on the one hand and emerging urban landscapes as well as processes of demographic change and political upheaval on the other. The session produced a comparative lens that tilted heavily in favour of a regional imaginary, unsettling and at times superseding national frames of reference. While the city constitutes an important site for posing this challenge, the category of the urban was also disaggregated. The papers situated the urban at the intersection of multiple forces, looking at the manner in which rural and semi-urban spatialities inform the material and representational modes of the city.

Nasreen Rehman's paper deals with the limits of cinematic representability in the film Dassi (1944), produced in a Lahore-based studio three years before the Partition. Idioms of love and mythical tropes are mobilized by the film to create the image of a modern Hindu subject while the Muslim figure is expunged from the

text. An idealised rural landscape embedded firmly within the traditional hierarchies of caste and gender and forming a stark counterpoint to the sinful, Westernised city, is deployed prominently towards this end. The discussion primarily concerned itself with the scope of the project, interrogating the relationship between the particular and the general in light of a fragmented and missing archive. Iftikhar Dadi inquired as to whether the film could be considered representative of a broader ideological project given the various modes and genres through which a variety of studio productions addressed the moment. Taking forward this line of questioning, Ira Bhaskar attempted to think through the film in a comparative frame, contrasting its rural-centric idiom with the urbane sophistication of the Lucknow-centric Muslim social genre. Emphasising that her project does not seek to make any ideological claims about the industry, Rehman argued that she was interested in the film as a case study that materialized the specific concerns of the filmmakers. At the same time, she cited Kaushik Bhaumik's work on the construction of a Hindu ethnoscape (2001), as well as other films such as Khazanchi (1941), to demonstrate that the film might be part of a broader trend wherein the Muslim population was invisiblized in Hindu-centric films. While the Muslim figure was absent here, the Hindu-Muslim friendship was in fact crucial to the plot in the Muslim social films. She also noted that the task of aesthetic and thematic comparison between Muslim-centric films from Lahore and the Muslim social became complicated as the imaginary of some Lahore-based films such as Khandaan (1942) was informed by Lucknavi styles and mannerisms. The discussion touched upon the problem of making conclusive generalisations when a majority of the films had perished, with Rehman mentioning that she relied on film booklets and textual materials where films were unavailable.

Ratheesh Radhakrishnan's paper looks at the emergence of the 'city' genre in Malayalam cinema, which has hitherto been heavily informed by a rural imaginary. He identified the Kochi film as part of a larger aesthetic and narrative project shaping the city in the wake of changing patterns of migration and industrialisation in the region. The discussion delved further into the construction of Kochi as a tourist and cultural destination, especially with reference to the staging of the Kochi Biennale. Radhakrishnan pointed out certain spatial continuities, noting that the empty, abandoned trading sites where the Biennale was held also featured prominently in many of the Kochi films. The discussion also teased out the connections between Malayalam cinema and other film industries in the South, particularly Tamil cinema. While Madurai has been used as an othering device to understand the city of Chennai, Radhakrishnan argued that the relationship between Kochi and the State capital of Trivandrum must be seen in a different light. According to him, the absence of a pre-existing urban imaginary in Malayalam cinema has meant that Kochi films constitute the first attempt to visualise the urban in the region. Rather than othering the city or replacing an earlier urban imagination, therefore, they stake a claim to the city.

Kajri Jain's paper examines the emergence of iconic statues in the wake of economic liberalisation in the 1990s, positing the auto industry as crucial to the creation of new assemblages in contemporary India. Working with a broad notion of screen cultures that includes windscreens, she mapped the intense exchanges between cars, highways, the built environment and post-reform cinema in India. Spaces as diverse as religious theme parks and multiplex cinemas were seen as 'hetero-modern' formations that are located at the intersection of multiple temporalities and functionalities. The discussion threw up a variety of readings and

interpretations of these spaces, further elucidating the impossibility of attributing any singular logic to them. Pritham Chakravarthy pointed out that wall murals of religious icons in Chennai came up as part of an effort to clean up the city and prevent men from urinating in public. While acknowledging that public utility may have been a concern, Jain argued that civic beautification efforts depicting not just icons but scenes of nature and cultural heritage, are intimately connected to the development of urban networks of transportation. Kaushik Bhaumik reckoned that religious statues and icons dotting highways speak as much to the past as to the present, and are deeply imbricated in the memorialisation of a messy and violent modernity. Noting that these statues figure prominently on aerial routes, Lalitha Gopalan inquired as to whether they were scaled to be visible even from high-angle shots. Jain pointed out that the transformation was not so much of the point of view but more in relation to the outward movement of cultic images that had hitherto been housed in temples. She attributed the scale and size of the statues to various socio-historical factors. For instance, she noted that the religious theme park emerged at the same time as the Poona Pact of 1937 which allowed access to temples for all castes. Considerations of caste were therefore seen as more crucial to the scaling of statues than the point of view enabled for a particular mode of transportation.

Documents and Documentaries

Chair: Shohini Ghosh

Rapporteur: Harmanpreet Kaur

Annamaria Motrescu-Mayes' paper on colonial amateur films delved into the construction of imperial identities and colonial hierarchies. She discussed the morbid exoticism of some of the films in the archive and the fantasy of a colonial memory. The discussion centred on the the question raised by Madhuja Mukherjee of the difference between the amateur archive and the imperial archive and whether they speak to each other ideologically and aesthetically. In response, Annamaria discussed the idea of amateur films in the colonial context as a practice rather than a genre which had a relationship with imperial studies when it came to themes of race, gender etc. She stated that amateur films remained in the personal archive for a long time and were not included in the national archive. But now that film archives have provided online access to amateur films of the period, it is a question as to how they are presented. Can these images be shown online and how should they be protected from misuse when it comes to images of nudity and rituals? She explained that it was decided in the Empire films digital archive project that it was best to use short clips. These had to be contextualised with background information but without offering interpretation. However some films were selected to be presented with context and analysis.

Camille Deprez's paper discussed the idea of 'cinematic recycling' in Indian documentary films. For her this meant the blurring of the official and unofficial, the

real, reel, fiction and documentary and she discussed some of Paromita Vohra's work like Unlimited Girls (2011). Madhuja Mukherjee felt that Vohra's work also converses with art projects in India like that of the artist Pushpamala and works within the domain of using material from Bollywood in the art world.

Shweta Kishore's research into the CENDIT (Centre for Development of Instructional Technology) archive dealt with its' rather liminal location of being neither public nor commercial. Kishore discussed the Centre's foray into rural communication and its usage of portable small format video which brought out the complicated relationship between art and activist cinema. The discussion brought up ideas of how to save archives from dying and to make them available online and accessible in the public domain. Shohini Ghosh questioned Kishore on the problem of her methodology and problems of video formats that are difficult to access and play back. Kishore responded by stating that the CENDIT archive of the latter years of the late 90s was recovered from institutions that they provided films to; however, their earlier work is totally unavailable. She felt that one has to use oral histories and printed material that addresses the material. For example she looked into the commentaries by documentary producers in Nigaah, the CENDIT quarterly magazine. Sanjay Kak felt that contrary to Kishore's observation that portable video formats made shooting easier, for at least a decade in the transition from film to video, portable video equipment was even more huge and cumbersome than 16mm. Further, how is it possible to evaluate the self-image of an institution as represented by itself in such a missing archive? He felt one needs to look at contesting narratives from different sources to elicit the institutional conditions and practices of the time. Shohini Ghosh also felt that in her methodology, Kishore

could speak to people who remembered those documentaries and the affect they generated.

Mapping Archives

Chair: Stephen Putnam Hughes

Rapporteur: Abhija Ghosh

From histories of urban spheres, documentations and documentaries, presentations in this session demonstrated a range of negotiations with older forms of archives, including transforming the notions of archiving, public access and the physical space of the traditional archive itself. While the idea of hosting virtual archives in the public domain may not be new, this session had suggestive discussions about the way research methods and curatorial interests have reengaged institutional archives. **Tom Rice** and **Emma Sandon**, both part of the team of Colonial Film: Moving Images of the British Empire (http://www.colonialfilm.org.uk) spoke on their projects as these related to three major colonial archives, the UK National Film Archives, Imperial War Museum and British Empire and Commonwealth Museum. The objective here was to catalogue, annotate, and create public access to histories of colonial film. Rice demonstrated various aspects of the website citing examples both on and off site and how those came to be catalogued. In navigating often indiscriminate desires to digitize collections, and academic objectives of contextualizing archival footage, Rice argued

that the format of an academic essay continued to prove relevant to the design of the project. Colonial films like Panorama of Calcutta and District Officer, as well as the newsreel, Indian News Parade were some examples he cited in addressing the way the online resource was developed to counter an insular British national history and urge its engagement with the history of the empire. The value of these non canonical, propagandist, informational/instructional films, and their contexts of exhibition, was further elaborated in Emma Sandon's presentation. This looked at British Missionary Film production as a movement for evangelism that traversed various colonial territories. Sandon's paper could be looked at as a case study for the academic possibilities provided by the formation of such websites even as her paper itself analysed a genre specific to Christian practices of the empire, the missionary films.

Questions in this session were mostly raised regarding the process of cataloguing, digitization and resolution of the available film material. However, Ashish Rajadhyaksha raised a significant question about problematizing the category of 'colonial' under which the material was being housed, as it might constrain public engagement and continuing the project in the long-term. Given that the colonial film project was essentially imagined as a five year long initiative, the ways of sustaining and hosting such a web archive were also issues discussed. While the presenters were hopeful of continued institutional support, members in the audience were concerned for the viability of such a project if it was only conceived for a limited period of time. Finally, V.S. Kundu, Director of Films Division, India, reflected on whether this initiative could be a possible model for India, an issue which was carried on into the following session, on the role of the Indian government's documentary filmmaking unit.

FD Zone

V.S. Kundu, Director, Films Division, in conversation with Independent Filmmakers, Surabhi Sharma and Avijit Mukul Kishore

Rapporteur: Abhija Ghosh

Avijit Mukul Kishore began by addressing the new vision that animated FD, the processes of institutional introspection, exhibitionary opportunities, possibilities for film production and human resource mobilization that had opened up in Films Division under Kundu's leadership. Surabhi Sharma emphasized the importance of the formation of FD Zone for the promotion and exhibition of independent and small films, even though there was a need to chart out the future trajectories that it might take. Perhaps one of the highlights of this session was Kundu's matter of fact delineation of bureaucratic roadblocks. At the same time he expressed optimism for systemic change and urged the importance of the intervention of filmmakers and film scholars to strengthen these possibilities. Films Division has been a key institution of film in India since 1948, documenting and promoting various kinds of filmmaking, albeit within parameters set by the state. With its recent turn towards the digital in January, 2013 and creation of spaces such as the FD Zone and the research center in Mumbai, it aspires to support and create access to alternative streams of film cultural practices in the country. In the discussion, Surabhi Sharma raised the issue of the role of the FD film archives and its accessibility. Kundu replied that this was perhaps an area where more academic collaboration and intervention would be useful at a time when FD was contemplating ways of

generating access. There were, however, some constraints: due to technical glitches and procedural demands of bureaucracy the possibility of buying virtual space online had been rendered moot. There was therefore a need for new stakeholders, primarily filmmakers, researchers and academicians to take interest in renegotiating these institutional terms, and if not to open the archives at least to generate accessibility.

Regarding the issue of academic participation, Mukul Kishore suggested it would be productive if the recent FD research and information center that has been developed in Mumbai could be a facility made available in Delhi or other cities in India which were academically inclined and active. However, Kundu remarked on the governmental logic that determined such endeavors, and only the functional success of the Mumbai center could lead to creation of more such centers. The discussion then turned from issues of access to the condition and material life of the FD archive with Avijit Mukul Kishore raising concerns about the deteriorating health of film prints. Kundu accepted the need for expertise in restoration and preservation practices while noting that this specific task was being done by the National Film Archive of India (NFAI). There was also the central government proposed plan for the National Film Heritage Mission in which FD along with NFAI and National Film Development Corporation (NFDC) would act as nodal agencies.

The first round of questions which came from the audience was surprisingly related to television, and came as a reminder that Films Division had played a role in early national television programming. It was also revealing how memory, collective or individual could activate the archive in its search to recall visual or moving image material. Recalling from memory the series of documentaries by FD on musicians

working with Indian instruments, Shikha Jhingan inquired whether FD had retained any print archive of such programmes it documented, especially relating to lives of musicians and performers. In a more contemporary scenario, S.V Srinivas asked whether there were any plans to reestablish FD through television. In response to the first question, Kundu replied that it was an unfortunate truth that government norms required discarding of print material older than seven years. There was a collective gasp from the audience when Kundu made his remarks on the government disposal of old print material and even records on magnetic tape. However, he noted that chance has a role to play, and energies need to be employed to retrieve any surviving records of significance and interest. As for contemporary television, while an idea for a documentary channel had been floated, as of now there was no initiative, and, formally, Doordarshan was responsible for managing any State endeavors in television.

Ravi Vasudevan suggested, in response to the idea that FD films were boring, that existent FD film material offered great potential for historians and film scholars. The history of works produced by FD house information about issues such as changing material life, consumption practices, and publicity, along with state pedagogical functions, and was a repository that new techniques of digital searching could make in to a great resource. Lalitha Gopalan expressed excitement regarding the present curatorial efforts that FD was opening up. However she thought that the turn to digitization needs to be engaged with more professionally as well as critically. There was need to also educate ourselves more on the risks of digital formats and take up issues of preservation of negatives and positive film material. Gopalan's anxiety was also reciprocated by Iyesha Geeth Abbas who

insisted that the value of the cinematic object was lost in the process of digitized archiving initiated by the government institutions.

There were also some strong oppositional responses on the narrative of optimism around new roles of FD and its promotion of film culture. Filmmaker Sanjay Kak responded very strongly, disagreeing with the possibility of accessing lost histories and memories through Films Division material. Kak categorized FD only as the custodian of State memory by the virtue of which it could only present controlled and limited memories of contemporary India. He argued for the need to think more clearly about forms of public record that were more expansive and representative, and the possible role FD could play in this. He appeared also to point to issues of public access and entitlement, when he asked whose archive it is that FD has so zealously guarded and continues to guard. Ashish Rajadhyakha also added that the institution has in its recent productive form functioned on the basis of individual volunteers and enthusiasts for a substantial period of time now. Perhaps it's time that the historical inevitability of government processes be recognized and countered by other community formations with respect to cinema scholarship, production and archiving. To this Kundu appeared to evoke a history of shifting and perhaps contingent functions. He noted Films Division's entry into filmmaking was as part of the publicity arm of the government. He seemed to imply that public intervention and engagement was crucial to the role it would play; he recommended the incorporation of academic perspectives as well as intellectual guidance simultaneously hinting at the financial and bureaucratic constraints which hinder it.

The existence, function, imagination and reinvention of the traditional archive formed one of the primary connecting concepts throughout the sessions of the day. It raised disciplinary questions at the same time challenging the status of colonial and state repositories. The interface of the physical archive with the virtual interactive as well as public access database generated several disciplinary and curatorial curiosities which continued over to the next day with Sebastian Lűtgert and Ashish Rajadhyaksha's presentation on the http://www.indiancine.ma. This is a virtual annotated archive of Indian cinemas, with provision for live streaming and user uploads, which seeks to circumvent ownership and copyright concerns in order to generate public access and interaction with film history. It demonstrates the possibilities of academic engagement with the digital film object by annotating its content, supplementing film with historical documents and in some sense expanding the imagination of the archive into a rich vein of multiple materials, forms, and modes of documentation designed to grow with participation.

January 11, 2014, Saturday

Panel Discussion on Curations Led by Rashmi Sawhney

Rapporteur: Harmanpreet Kaur

Madhuja Mukherjee, Moinak Biswas, Pritham and Venkatesh Chakravarthy, Virchand Dharamsey and Iyesha Geeth Abbas discussed the process and ideas

behind each of their curations and installations at the conference. Rashmi Sawhney led the discussion by addressing the variety of perspectives on the history of Indian cinema offered by the curators who came from different backgrounds. Sawhney in her response to the curated works felt that it was not only an exhibition of Indian cinema but of the practice of research. At one level this mode makes knowledge accessible to an audience who are not necessarily specialists; however, it also throws a challenge to intellectual reflection since it is not a research paper or a book. It suggests an understanding of knowledge as a project that is archival and encyclopaedic, and relates related to the museum's method of collecting and presenting objects that allows knowledge and research to open up in different ways.

Ravi Vasudevan stated that the concept behind the curated installations was to open up different types of material and assemble it interestingly in a way that is able to explore the composition of film experience. For him, the whole process of assembly of material enabled the presentation of diverse components of filmmaking and film exhibition which could be rendered meaningfully in different ways, whether through curation or academic interpretation and writing. In this context, the Media Lab at Jadavpur University in Kolkata had signalled new directions for pedagogy and research that offers a different engagement with text, visuals and sounds through digital practices. Lalitha Gopalan felt it to be an inspired idea to have the session as part of the academic session and not sidelined from the main sessions.

Lotte Hoek responded to Madhuja Mukherjee's observation that certain types of research material could not be footnoted and were inadmissible in academic

writing. Hoek appreciated the different access and connections that the curated form provided. However, as the majority of contemporary cinema culture is unfootnotable, as it is illegal or marginal, she did not feel that it is thereby inadmissible in her writing. For Hoek, it is a question of academic discipline, a question of how to write a description or a narrative. Mukherjee clarified that during her research into Bharat Lakshmi studios, questions came up regarding where the material came from, how it was found and whether it could be dated or not. Rather than see these uncertainties as constraints, she enjoyed the challenge of speculating and finds that shifts in approach are necessary and now possible with newer kinds of research subjects.

Rashmi Sawhney also felt that it was an exciting moment for a cross dialogue between cinema and curatorial studies. With India having a film culture that exists on the street and not in the museum, and the dispersed nature of archives that are unofficial and personal, curation opens out new possibilities of engaging with material and housing it. Ranita Chatterjee also felt that as academics one ends up collecting a constellation of material which is not in the official archive. Yet, a lot stays out of the public domain and it is worth making it available so that others can look beyond the logic ascribed to it and make their own sense of it allowing other narratives to spring up. Similarly, Stephen Hughes agreed that as scholars we each are archives unto ourselves since what comes out in our articles is a small part of existing material. He stated that the model of pad.ma already deals with this situation for documentary filmmakers by archiving their footage that does not make it to the final cut. This creates a different archive. He felt he was constantly recycling his own material over the years and feels the need for it to go somewhere, not sure where exactly, for there is a materiality also involved in it. There is material

that cannot be digitised such as machines and other physical gear connected to cinema. However, SV Srinivas concluded by mentioning that the young discipline of Film Studies in India is actually a series of archive building exercises that began with a workshop on Tamil cinema in '97 to the '99 Telegu cinema workshop, the Sarai archive, Media Lab and so on. He felt it was fitting to end the conference with Sebastian's presentation on the new online archive where with a username and password, every cinema researcher's wish would be granted.

Detailing Technology

Chair: Nitin Govil

Rapporteur: Harmanpreet Kaur

Ranjani Mazumdar and Anand Pandian in their papers research the use of colour technologies. Mazumdar presented on the use of Technicolor and Eastman colour in Indian cinema of the 1960s which, according to her, signalled the arrival of colour as signifying success and glamour. **Pandian**'s paper was based on a chapter from his new book on the process of filmmaking, from script to post-production, of the Tamil language film Quarter Cutting (2010). Pandian conveyed the film's use of colour in an expressive manner and drew on Goethe's Theory of Colours while talking about the saturated palette that the film achieves. **Shikha Jhingan**'s paper discussed new styles of music in Bombay cinema which drew upon folk music, and

which avoided lip-sync in its rendition, arguably reducing the role of lyrics in the organisation of the diegesis.

Uma Bhrugubanda asked Shikha Jhingan whether online downloads contributed to the changing style of songs. Jhingan agreed that a lack of monetisation may have led to bids to create a unique sound that acts as a hook especially for ringtones. Also in song analysis today, she felt that the sound of the singer's voice plays an important role as a sonic object. Ravikant felt that lyrics did hold meaning in the song Yehi hai zindagi from the film Dev D which Jhingan had played as an example, contrary to her argument that the visual representation was disconnected from the lyrics and thus reduced their importance. Where lyrics might be connected to film narrative in this instance, he also argued that meanings emerge from a larger social history of who is singing at what time. In the case of cinema, this includes the presence of marginal characters, groups of people or fakirs professing higher truths through their singing. This is a rich cultural and filmic memory on which the structure of the song builds and which persists today. Jhingan explained that she was not discounting the importance of lyrics but pushing the idea of the song as an aural entity.

Rajan Krishnan suggested that Anand Pandian's feverishly written and presented/performed chapter on colour spoke to Ranjani Mazumdar's paper on 60s colour cinema as in both instances colour spells an exoticism of the image. There is a difference, however: the exoticism of the 60s versus the banality of Quarter Cutting signals a turn towards the everyday as a register of intense experience. Stephen Hughes felt that the form of Pandian's work was almost experimental, constituting an alternative approach to ethnographic writing. He

wanted to know in what way the expressive gives him a tool for talking about experience and phenomenology.

Kajri Jain felt that there was a discourse of taste involved in colour cinema and suggested that Mazumdar might be interested in looking at vernacular sources in her methodology, such as Diwali specials of certain magazines. Mazumdar felt that it was methodologically interesting for her to view her paper alongside Pandian's and to deal with the palette used in Quarter Cutting. There was a stylised use of colour in the film just as there is a sense of style in the 1960s too. But as with the unfolding logics of Elsaesser's media archaeology, her research is posed with the challenge of addressing older and decaying forms of film technology. While Technicolor film retains colour, Eastman colour does not and fades away with time and there is no knowledge of how DVD transfers have taken place. She arrived at the methodology of interviewing art directors who were responding to a range of colour drawn from various print sources and their wider circulation in artefacts such as posters.

Pandian felt that in the ordinary world of experience, sounds, rhythm and imagination are at work. He wanted to draw out these registers by following the production process of a film. It is true that other than colour, various things are also at work like textual engagement and the inter-relationship between various sensory registers. While following the directors of the film closely, he soon realised how things changed on location and the ordinary appeared along with the eventful and extraordinary. On Kajri Jain's question whether his writing style would hold a book reader, he felt his style is located in experience. For him, experience ties in with experiment which is not the property of a subject who is constantly aware. Instead

experience is transgressive, interested in the phenomenon of becoming otherwise. Cinema is a place to achieve that which is founded on a transgressive movement of becoming. He wondered if he could tap into that as a writer to convey a more tangible sense of how cinema employs this technique. Thus, he tried his best to harness the materiality and density of observations and interviews so that the material qualities could creep into his writing. He also felt that there was a conjectural quality to the way these films were made and he tried to participate in the same mode. He wanted to think through the materiality of the process of filmmaking, to see how creation happened and the nature of the worlds in which cinema arose.

The Intermedia Constellation

Chair: Anand Pandian

Rapporteur: Abhija Ghosh

This session chaired by Anand Pandian moved from intermedia constellation of archives to observing intermedia objects and aesthetics in the cinematic imagination of early Indian film and contemporary media. **Sudhir Mahadevan**'s paper "Cinema in the Snares of the Snapshot: Print, Photography and the Cinematic Imaginary in Early Twentieth Century India" developed questions of intermediallity through the methods of media archeology and the study of cinematic reception in early Indian cinema. Traversing panoramas, snapshots, prose and newsprint,

Mahadevan argued that cinema technology exercised a presence and shared forms and functions with each of these media. In contemplating the nature of such an intermedia cinematic gaze specific to the South Asian context, he proposed the figure of the "processionist" as opposed to the western observer of distractions, the flaneur, citing the example of a 1950s Films Division film, Black Sheep, which situates cinema as the benevolent instrument of State surveillance. Mahadevan's presentation put forward the possibility of tracing intermedia networks facilitated by early experiments with cinema technology that subsequently transited to narratives and practices of investigative journalism with the emergence of modern colonial cities.

Ravikant's paper, "Visualizing Listening: Radio in Hindi Cinema, c. 1935-2000", a mapping of the cinematic life of radio, as media adversary, object and imagination could be seen as an extension of his "Radio in Cinema" installation at the conference. He engaged with the concept of intermedia, as a specific condition and as part of a larger ecology. His presentation explored various popular and institutional responses to radio, broadcasting histories and the appearance of the radio as a contentious object in cinema. He displayed a series of memorable filmic examples, such as deification of the radio in Saigal's Dushman, an act of aggression against the radio in Barsaat Ki Ek Raat (1960) and even radio's relationship to time and discipline.

Ashish Rajadhyaksha remarked that it might be useful to think of the governmental attitude towards cinema and radio, the institutional investment in radio but not in cinema and how these relations might impinge on radio's representation in popular cinema. Lalitha Gopalan focused on the relationship between film sound and radio

sound within the diegesis, and if and how these were distinguished. In response, Ravikant suggested that the state's investment in radio was asymmetrical, seeking not only to invest but to regulate, making it over into both a valorized form and a stigmatized object. He positioned his research as an exercise in the history of listening, with the intuitive understanding that popular radio offered an archive of media, language, music and sound. Questions to Sudhir Mahadevan were mostly on the nature of the evidential photograph, such as the possibility of determining whether a photograph was candid or staged so that it could be part of the forensic record. Referring to Hiralal Sen's shot of a crowd, Mahadevan concluded that early intermedia negotiations. especially those using the hand camera, exhibited a desire to locate temporality as cinematic imagination converging with forensic senses of geography. He alluded to the related paths of historiographical inquiry already being undertaken in such as the session on cities and history.

Screen Cultures and Information Ecologies I

Chair: Ravi Sundaram

Rapporteur: Debjani Dutta

Drawing heavily on Deleuze's interventions in film theory, this panel tried to capture paradigmatic shifts in film language, reception and archiving. The papers presented new modes of reading and navigating through cinema, structuring films through the logic of sense perception rather than narrative continuity. Even as cinema was

seen as deeply embedded in the social and physical world, the papers re-imagined the relationship between the two. Film functioned not as a representation of a given social formation or historical moment but as engaged in sensuous dialogue with multiple temporalities and spaces. In the context of Indian cinema, melodrama emerged as key to this process of the production and transfer of affect. The panel also produced critical reflections on the problems of transposing the Deleuzian schema to the Indian scenario while accounting for its cultural and historical specificity.

Rajan Krishnan's paper looks at the relationship between sound and image in Tamil cinema, arguing that the soundtrack subordinated the visual field in its production of affect. Dialogue and songs become important means of accessing cultural memory, and forgotten histories continue to haunt film through sound even as they are erased or muted in the visual track. Drawing parallels between Krishnan's work and Sebastian Lűtgert's presentation, Anand Pandian began the discussion by noting that both work with a notion of the sensory-motor image that propels us along a particular course of action in the world. He pointed out that the narrative flow of films becomes incidental to both Krishnan's mobilization of the song sequence in his work, as well as Lűtgert's archival tools that work with a different mode of cinematic perception. Lalitha Gopalan sought to re-emphasise the role of the visual in producing melodrama, arguing that the visual has its own affective language that functions independently of the dialogue. However, Krishnan argued for the primacy of song lyrics in producing a visceral response, pointing out that this history of reception is well-documented. In fact, the moment when the protagonists tear up in the song corresponds exactly to the relevant lyric. He contended that in this case, lyrics acted as the repository of pathos and longing and

were much more crucial to the creation of affect than the visual composition of cinematic space.

As part of his project mapping the historical shifts in the language of Indian cinema, **Anustup Basu**'s paper examines the film Saawariya (2007) as an example of the new sensorium and style employed by Bollywood in the post-liberalisation era. Looking at the way in which the past is woven into visual references in the film, he connects this creation of the 'commonsensual' in contemporary cinema to the notion of an emerging urban Hindu normativity. In the discussion, Abhishek Kukreja pointed out that while film audiences and modes of perception have changed fundamentally, the cinematic has also intervened in the constitution of physical spaces. Emphasising this thrust in Deleuze's own work, Anustup Basu noted that he not only saw cinema as an extension of the social world but also accounted for the new rhythms and energies that cinema infuses into life itself. Ranjani Mazumdar wondered as to the usefulness of Deleuze's theory in this context. While Basu pointed out the relevance of Deleuze's schema to his historical categorisation of Indian cinema, he acknowledged the frictions between his project and this theoretical frame and highlighted his critical relationship to it.

Sebastian Lűtgert's presentation focused on web-based archival tools that help in arranging, sorting and accessing vast amount of digital film material. Breaking the digital film object down to its constitutive data components, he looked at new ways of cataloguing the vast amounts of digital material floating in cyberspace. The discussion brought to light the considerable difficulties in categorising his project as either a purely technical or artistic endeavour. Lűtgert argued that this was not a theoretical problem but a practical one that addressed his own concerns as a user

and collector of films. As a free open-source and open-access platform, it also allows other users to create their own archives as well as collaborate to sort and annotate the public archive. Even as Ravi Sundaram interpreted his work as a critical archaeological intervention that tries to capture the materiality of contemporary cinematic experience, Lűtgert opened up the question to the users of the tool by asking them to share their own interpretations of how it functioned for them.

Screen Cultures and Information Ecologies II

Chair: Ravi Vasudevan

Rapporteur: Debjani Dutta

Focusing on the various kinds of collectives materializing around different cinema cultures in the recent years, this panel looked at the emergence of a broad figure of the 'producer-viewer'. The first half of the session looks at a local video industry that deploys a cross range of slapdash, informal, improvisatory techniques to produce biting lampoons of well-known Hindi and Hollywood big budget franchises. These cinephiles-turned-amateur-film makers spoof big-ticket national/ international blockbusters with a kind of sarcastic, often acerbic humour to a degree that these remakes aren't just homage to these popular originals but ironic commentaries on the myriad social contradictions within the industry's local milieu. The second half of the session noted that the decline of celluloid coincided with the

visible emergence of new kinds of mass aggregates that have recently proved to be extremely compelling political agents, despite not fitting the description of traditional political formations (like the masses support for the Anna Hazare led India Against Corruption rally that subsequently formed a huge part of the support base for the Aam Aadmi Party.) It held that the history of cinema spectatorship in India can be consonantly read with the history of the development of this 'political agent-consumer' figure who is at once a vociferous film/media consumer as well as a participant in reactive performances to media events.

Bhaskar Sarkar invoked 'plastic' as the primary metaphor behind thinking of Bollywood as a global as well as local gesture. He used this notion to frame the rise of the Malegaon film industry that became popular post the various documentaries and news reports made on it since 2007 (the most popular of which was Faiza Ahmed Khan's Superman of Malegaon). These films, he argued, suggest a simultaneity of enchantment with the capital order alongside a deep skepticism that comes out of looking at the very real contradictions of social life in the area.

Discussion yielded different ways in which the 'plasticity' of this sort of a local industry vis a vis the mainstream Bombay film industry could be traced. Nitin Govil suggested that one of the defining traits of plastic was the fact that it can't ever be entirely disposed and always needs to be converted into a different form of itself. The question of conversion in Sheikh Sheikh's life into a Phalke-like figure is significant, especially because Phalke himself is known to have a clear moment of conversion while watching Life of Christ during which he decided to become a film maker. Similarly Sheikh Nasir also went through a similar moment of conversion from cinephile-distributor to film maker while working at his dad's video library as a

kid. He would cut down film strips of famous films like Terminator into 20 minutes so it would fit the screening time of his dad's video library; and it was during this process of actually converting celluloid strips that he understood basic ideas of temporality and narrative. Govil felt there were various kinds of plastic conversions happening within Nasir Sheikh and Malegaon's cinema practice especially when thinking though its analogy with early Indian cinema.

Lotte Hoek suggested that it might be productive If Sarkar considered the continuities instead of the ruptures with other mainstream film formulations in South Asia. Sarkar pitts these regional video industries against a certain idea of Bollywood – which is a space of pure professionalization, the model of efficient management in time, sets and economics. But the mainstream film industries across South Asia continue to often be extraordinarily improvisational, rudimentary with use of low cost visual effects, sound etc. So Hoek contends that setting off these new local industries against Bollywood as a hyper professional space might lead to losing out on the critical viewpoint these new industries offer us on mainstream film industries in South Asia. Shaina Anand commented that the reason Sheikh Nasir refuses to give interviews now is because Zoya Akhtar has recently purchased his life rights, which prohibit him from speaking to the media. So a kind of annexation of Malegaon by Bollywood has already been inaugurated. Yomi Braester inquired into why Sarkar had chosen to refer to Superman of Malegaon only as a source, rather than being part of his critical narrative. He argued that similar currents have been witnessed in China – lots of villages now have provincial TV stations, and the demand for original content has spurred very low budget martial arts films that are discernably much more low-tech and camp than even the Malegaon films. There is at least one documentary about each of

these cultures, at least 3 fiction films, and a preoccupation with these pirate production by the mainstream.

Sarkar responded to Yomi by arguing that none of these Malegaon films were actually box office successes beyond the confines of Malegaon. Faiza'sdocumentary was actually responsible for these films getting visibility. This is essentially a question of visibility and translation - the Malegaon films have a very localized brand of humor. In response to Lotte's question, Sarkar began by referring to the concept of jugaad. He conjectured that if the Malegaon industry had the choice of acquiring more money they would definitely shift to Bombay and readily get integrated within Bollywood. Which is why, Sarkar added, that he positioned this as a liminal space between resistance and celebration. Bollywood is preponderant in their very imagination, so relationally it can be seen as a very subaltern space of creativity, which often trumps even Bollywood by its sheer inventiveness

SV Srinivas posits the celluloid fan as a collective figure that often leaks into different political and semi-political formations. He argues for the rise of a political agent who is both a constant media consumer, and an ardent participant in reactive performances which are triggered by these media events. In the discussion, Rajan connected Srinivas's argument to Laclau's ideas on populism. Both fan clubs, as well as Kejriwal's brand of mass mobilization, are for Rajan subsumed within a kind of populism. He asked Srinivas to demarcate the shift to the anti-political in clearer terms. Ravi Sundaram put into question the two basic typologies - of the political being an explanation of the media, and media being an explanation of the political. He suggested that instead of thinking of the media as a necessary explanation of politics, what was required was an investigation of

whether our very experience has foundationally changed. What we define as experience (including categories of mediation and performance) and the way we relate to objects/the material world around us has fundamentally changed. There is now a performative side to nearly everything. He argued that maybe it was time to let go of the idea of the media as an expression of politics, and to think of politics as part of this realm of mediation which has no necessary logic.

Srinivas agreed with Sundaram's provocation about experience in itself having changed. He claimed that in a way the whole history of spectatorship ties up with a history of reaction – for example if one reads a novel and cries one is being reactive. But Srinivas suggests that is not the level of his paper's engagement with the political. Even if one were to momentarily let go of the celluloid and post celluloid debate, even the old distinction between consumer and producer, has been irredeemably altered. The consumer now produces commodities and performance. Fandom has now changed - fans are not just of personalities but media forms. The news junkie is a political activist, and increasingly a consumer producer – and its impossible to separate out political agency and the act of production. Srinivas claims that that the AAP crowd is a new entity of this sort, someone agitated about something which is not quite politics. This is the new normal in our new media consumption habits: media produces, we consume and that in itself becomes a political act.